

Message Text

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SUBJECT: INTSUM 374 - AUGUST 5, 1977

MOSCOW, KUWAIT, SANA FOR AMBASSADORS

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING

1. EGYPT-LIBYA. THE MILITARY SITUATION ALONG THE BORDER
REMAINS RELATIVELY CALM. HOWEVER, REPORTING SUGGESTS
EGYPT IS CONTINUING TO AUGMENT ITS FORCES IN ANTICIPATION
OF RENEWED HOSTILITIES. RAIL TRAFFIC FROM ALEXANDRIA TO
THE WESTERN MILITARY DISTRICT IS REPORTEDLY HEAVIER THAN
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NORMAL, INDICATING THAT THE BUILDUP OF FORCES AND MATERIEL
IN THE WEST IS CONTINUING AT AN ENERGETIC PACE.

2. ON THE POLITICAL FRONT, THE WAR OF WORDS GOES ON, AND
THE PROPAGANDA STANDDOWN THAT REPORTEDLY WAS ARRANGED
THROUGH VARIOUS MEDIATION EFFORTS HAS NOT OCCURRED.
PRESIDENT SADAT IS CONTINUING HIS EFFORTS TO CLARIFY EGY'S

POSITION WITH THE OTHER ARAB STATES, AND THIS CAN BE

INTERPRETED EITHER AS ATTEMPTS TO VINDICATE EGYPT'S OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS AGAINST LIBYA OR AS LAYING THE GROUND-WORK FOR FUTURE MILITARY OPERATIONS. SADAT'S EFFORTS MAY BE PAYING POLITICAL DIVIDENDS. RECENT REPORTING INDICATES AN UNDERCURRENT OF SUPPORT FOR EGYPTIAN ACTION FROM INFLUENTIAL MIDDLE EAST CAPITALS. (SECRET)

3. LEBANON. ARMY COMMANDER BRIGADIER VICTOR KHOURY CONTINUES TO PURSUE A CAUTIOUS APPROACH IN HIS ATTEMPTS TO REBUILD THE COUNTRY'S ARMED FORCES. HE PRESENTLY CONSIDERS ONLY THE 1ST BRIGADE LOCATED IN THE BIQA VALLEY TO BE OPERATIONAL. KHOURY'S PRIMARY PROBLEMS ARE STILL SEVERE EQUIPMENT SHORTAGES AND ACHIEVING AN ACCEPTABLE BALANCE OF CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS WITHIN THE ARMY.

4. A RECRUITMENT DRIVE REPORTEDLY BEGAN AUGUST 1 AND THE RECRUITMENT OFFICES HAVE ALREADY BEEN ESTABLISHED THROUGHOUT MOST OF THE COUNTRY. KHOURY ANTICIPATES NO PROBLEM GETTING A SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF MUSLIM RECRUITS, HOWEVER, KHOURY ADMITS HE WILL HAVE TO RELY ON HIS BROTHER -- RECENTLY SELECTED AS BIQA MILITARY REGION COMMANDER -- TO PRODUCE "POLITICALLY RELIABLE" CHRISTIANS FROM THE BIQA AREA. SUITABLE RECRUITS OVER 18 YEARS OLD WILL BE ACCEPTED IF THEY AGREE NOT TO MARRY FOR THE FIRST
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FIVE YEARS OF SERVICE.

5. WITH AN EXTENSIVE RECRUITMENT DRIVE, KHOURY HOPES TO INFUSE THE ARMY WITH NEW BLOOD. TOGETHER WITH ACCEPTABLE RETURNEES FROM THE PRE-CIVIL WAR ARMY, HE ENVISIONS BUILDING A NEW ARMY OF YOUNG COMBAT-CAPABLE SOLDIERS. OVER 4,000 FORMER ARMY MEMBERS HAVE REPORTEDLY ANSWERED THE CALL TO RETURN AND ARE CURRENTLY AT VARIOUS REGROUPING CENTERS AWAITING PROCESSING. SENIOR MUSLIM OFFICERS HAVE INDICATED THAT MOST OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE LEBANESE ARAB ARMY -- ESTIMATED TO HAVE LESS THAN 1,000 PERSONNEL -- WANT TO RETURN. KHOURY BELIEVES, HOWEVER, THAT THE TOP LEADERSHIP MUST BE REMOVED FROM THE LAA PRIOR TO ABSORBING THE RANK AND FILE.

6. CONCERNING FUTURE MILITARY OPERATIONS, KHOURY BELIEVES THAT, DESPITE NUMEROUS PROBLEMS, HE WILL BE ABLE TO SEND A FORCE TO SOUTHERN LEBANON IN A FEW MONTHS AFTER BOTH THE PALESTINIAN AND THE CHRISTIAN INTENTIONS TOWARD STABILIZING THE AREA BECOME CLEAR. THE CURRENT PLAN IS TO DEPLOY THREE BATTALIONS, ONE CHRISTIAN AND TWO MUSLIM. THE CHRISTIAN BATTALION WOULD GO TO MARJAYOUN

WHILE MUSLIM UNITS WOULD BE STATIONED FROM BINT JUBAYL
TO NAKOURA. (CONFIDENTIAL)

7. JORDAN. RUMORS PERSIST IN AMMAN THAT KING HUSSEIN
WILL SOON REPLACE PRIME MINISTER BADRAN, ACCORDING TO
EMBASSY AMMAN. IT IS NOW WIDELY BELIEVED IN JORDAN THAT
BADRAN'S GOVERNMENT IS BEING KEPT IN OFFICE ONLY UNTIL
A PROPITIOUS MOMENT IS FOUND TO MAKE A SWITCH, PERHAPS
SOON AFTER THE KING'S SILVER JUBILEE CELEBRATION ON
AUGUST 11.

8. BADRAN CAME TO OFFICE IN JULY 1976 LARGEY IN THE
HOPE THAT HE COULD ALLEVIATE JORDAN'S DOMESTIC ILLS.
AFTER A FLURRY OF COSMETIC ACTIVITY IN HIS EARLY MONTHS,

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BADRAN AND HIS GOVERNMENT RETREATED INTO LETHARGY.
(EMBASSY AMMAN OBSERVED THAT THE NON-IMPLEMENTATION OF
PROGRAMS HAS BECOME A STANDING JOKE IN AMMAN.) BADRAN
WAS PARTICULARLY UNSUCCESSFUL IN REDRESSING ECONOMIC
PROBLEMS, SUCH AS THE CHRONIC BUDGET DEFICIT, HIGH
INFLATION, AND THE NEED FOR FURTHER LONG-TERM INDUSTRIAL
DEVELOPMENT.

9. DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS MAY ALSO HAVE
INFLUENCED THE KING'S ALLEGED DECISION TO FIND A NEW
PRIME MINISTER. MOREOVER, THERE HAVE BEEN INDICATIONS
THAT BADRAN'S CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH CROWN PRINCE HASSAN,
HIS POLITICAL BENEFACTOR, HAS SOURED. ADDITIONALLY, EAST
BANK BUSINESS LEADERS WOULD PREFER A CHANGE AND CONTINUED
FAILURE TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH JORDAN'S ECONOMIC
PROBLEMS COULD HAVE AN ADVERSE IMPACT ON KING HUSSEIN'S
STANDING WITH THE BODY POLITIC OVER THE LONGER TERM.

10. NEVERTHELESS, FOREIGN POLICY COULD WELL PROVE TO BE
THE DECIDING FACTOR. BADRAN'S POOR HANDLING OF THE
DOLLARS 140 MILLION HAWK MISSILE PAYMENT FROM SAUDI ARABIA
AND HIS EXCEEDINGLY CAUTIOUS APPROACH TO JORDAN'S
RELATIONS WITH SYRIA HAVE UNDERCUT HIS PRESTIGE WITHIN
LEADERSHIP CIRCLES AND HIS EFFECTIVENESS IN DEALING WITH
JORDAN'S ARAB NEIGHBORS. MORE IMPORTANT, AS JORDAN MOVES
INTO THE GENEVA PROCESS, THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT THE
KING MAY WANT AS PRIME MINISTER A MAN WITH FOREIGN POLICY
EXPERTISE.

11. THE MOST LIKELY SUCCESSORS TO BADRAN ARE:

(A) ROYAL COURT CHIEF SHARAF, THE APPARENT FRONT-
RUNNER. SHARAF IS A KEY FOREIGN POLICY ADVISOR, AND

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HIS INFLUENCE WITH THE KING SEEMS TO HAVE INCREASED IN RECENT MONTHS.

(B) EX-PREMIER RIFAI, A FLAMBOYANT PERSONALITY, WHO REMAINS CLOSE TO THE KING. LIKE SHARAF, HIS STRENGTH IS FOREIGN AFFAIRS, NOT DOMESTIC ISSUES. RIFAI SEES HIMSELF AS THE LEADER OF THE "PROGRESSIVE" EAST BANKERS WHO FAVOR A MORE ACTIVE JORDANIAN ROLE IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA, PARTICULARLY CONCERNING THE PEACE PROCESS.

(C) MINISTER OF EDUCATION AL-MAJALI, AN ABLE ADMINISTRATOR CONSIDERED TO HAVE GOOD LEADERSHIP QUALITIES.

12. WE THINK THAT A CHANGE IN JORDAN'S GOVERNMENT IS LIKELY, GIVEN THE CURRENT DOMESTIC SCENE IN JORDAN. THE TIMING OF THE MOVE, HOWEVER, IS OPEN TO QUESTION. MOREOVER, AS AMBASSADOR PICKERING HAS OBSERVED, HUSSEIN IS UNPREDICTABLE IN HIS APPOINTMENTS, AND SUCH A CHANGE IS NOT INEVITABLE. A CLEAR PROSPECT FOR RECONVENING GENEVA OR A RISE IN POPULAR DISCONTENT OVER ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES COULD PROVE TO BE THE CATALYST THAT HUSSEIN MAY NEED.

(CONFIDENTIAL) CHRISTOPHER

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